

Big Stone

Soil and Water Conservation District

342 NW 2nd St,
Ortonville, MN 56278
PHONE: (320) 839-6149
FAX: (320) 839-2933



www.bigstoneswcd.org

*SWCD Board Meeting:
First Tuesday of Month,
4 pm*

Recent Projects

Big Stone PF Farm Bill Biologist

Big Stone SWCD began a new era in conservation with the hiring of Travis Issendorf as the new Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologist. Travis began his tenure in this newly created position in October 2008. The position's primary focus is to promote, coordinate, and implement the conservation provision of the Federal Farm Bill and other related state conservation programs for landowners.

Funding for this position comes from Pheasants Forever, Big Stone SWCD, and the Farm Bill Assistance Partnership, which is comprised of the Minnesota DNR and Board of Water and Soil Resources. With wildlife becoming an ever-increasing focus in the Farm Bill, the need for more technical assistance grows each day as well. This position serves that need.

Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative

One of the Farm Bill Biologist's primary duties are promoting and implementing the Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative (WLI). The WLI program is a state-funded conservation program that began in 2007 to promote healthy lands



while supporting the agricultural community. The program fosters new and innovative ideas for conservation-minded farming through incentive payments for enrolling in conservation programs, new conservation techniques, and other ways of creating wildlife habitat on lands that are in agricultural production. The WLI program has allocated more than \$300,000 in the county and planned projects that will impact over 800 acres.

Top 5 Natural Resource Concerns

1. Water quality of principle waters of the County: Big Stone, Toqua, Artichoke & Long Tom Lakes; the Minnesota River and Stony Run Creek
2. Pesticide and nutrient runoff from ag land and fertilizer absorption from flooded cropland
3. Soil erosion
4. Increasing the amount of buffer and filter strips
5. Controlling invasive and exotic species in prairie lands and naturally wooded areas

2008 Budget

	INCOME	EXPENSE
Charges for Services	\$16,713	
County Annual Allotment	\$57,500	
Cost-Share Services	\$12,239	\$11,083
*WCA	\$10,000	\$27,000
General Services	\$22,075	
RIM Services	\$10,000	
*WLI	\$150,718	\$149,718
Native Buffer Grant	\$10,000	
RIM/WRP Grant Program	\$6,000	
Interest and misc. income	\$1,903	
*Farmbill Biologist	\$40,500	\$42,750
Programs and Operations		\$108,776
	\$337,648	\$339,327

*Pass-through dollars not available for SWCD use.



One of many wetlands amongst granite outcroppings which, due to WCA, will be avoided in a proposed mining operation plan in Big Stone County.

Saving Wetlands Through The Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Act

The Big Stone SWCD has been the LGU (local government unit) for administering the WCA in Big Stone County since 1995. Because of the ever increasing workload with WCA, and no increases in administrative funding from the state, the SWCD had no alternative than to ask if the county would take back the administrative responsibilities of WCA. With little if any increase in state funding for nearly a decade, the SWCD could not afford to hire new help, or to let other programs, such as the Tree Program, and RIM, which bring in some operating dollars, fall by the wayside. The SWCD is still required to provide a staff person to the TEP for WCA, which it will continue to do.

In 2009 numerous WCA projects arose that required a large amount of District Staff time. Some of these included several large ditch cleaning projects, a wetland replacement project, a banking application, and an ongoing mining operation proposal. Hours spent on WCA in 2009 totaled nearly 40% of 1 staff year.

On-going Programs

Trees - Despite the workload from numerous other conservation programs, the Big Stone SWCD, as well as other SWCDs, attempt to keep their tree programs functioning. The tree services provided by the SWCDs supply a necessary source of funding, partially making up for the lack of administrative funding that is associated with most of the state's conservation programs. Services include tree sales and planting, fabric sales and installation.

Native Grass Drill – The District owns and operates a native grass drill available to local landowners to establish cover on their conservation acres.

RIM/WRP – Several wetland restorations are underway, including six funded applications for 2009.

Conservation Cooperator – The SWCD participates in this statewide event, choosing a conservation minded farm operator from Big Stone County. Along with some local publicity, the conservation cooperator is invited to attend the annual MASWCD Convention, where their efforts are acknowledged by “The Farmer” magazine.

Future Projects

The Big Stone SWCD is cooperating with several other federal, state, and local agencies to form a CWMA (cooperative weed management area). The first year, 2010, interested parties are allowed to apply for a \$15,000 dollar grant from BWSR as start-up money to help get the CWMA up and running. The group initially chose 3 priority noxious weeds to target – Wild Parsnip, Queen Anne’s Lace, and Leafy Spurge. If the increased funding levels are achieved, the group plans to add other invasive species to the target list.

Four wetland restoration projects are underway. The SWCD is currently working with the BWSR and NRCS on these wetland restoration projects, funded through the Reinvest In Minnesota and Wetland Reserve Program (RIM/WRP) partnership. These four projects, on six separate properties, will restore 4 major basins as well as a few smaller basins, to nearly 100 acres of wetlands. Surrounding upland will be seeded with a diverse mix of native grasses and forbs, serving as a buffer and providing clean water to the wetlands as well as essential upland wildlife habitat. Continued challenges for the Big Stone SWCD are stable funding for basic operations, the difficulty in selling conservation programs and practices which do not compete financially with land values and commodity prices, and selling conservation programs in an agricultural County that currently has 27 percent of its land in some type of conservation cover.

Board Members

Scott Gillespie	Chair	(320) 748-7149	22671 Cty Hwy 21, Graceville, MN 56240
Vernon Johnson	Vice Chair	(320) 325-5507	34761 760 th Ave., Ortonville, MN 56278
Mike Jorgenson	Member	(320) 325-5369	33626 660 th Ave., Clinton, MN 56225
Holly Wellendorf	Member	(320) 839-2636	74695 Ridgeview Dr., Ortonville, MN 56278
Lon Moen	Treasurer	(320) 273-2279	414 2nd St E, Odessa, MN 56276